

A  
L E T T E R  
TO THE RIGHT HON.  
THOMAS HARLEY, Esq;  
LORD MAYOR OF THE  
CITY OF LONDON.

To which is added,

A Serious Expostulation with the LIVERY,  
On their late Conduct, towards JOHN WILKES, Esq;  
during the Election of the Four CITY MEMBERS.

By an Alderman of LONDON.

\_\_\_\_\_ Pudet hæc opprobria Nobis  
Et dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli.

OVID.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for W. BINGLEY, opposite Durham-Yard in the Strand.

*Received* MDCCLXVIII. May 7.

[Price One Shilling.]

# LETTER

TO THE RIGHT HON.

THOMAS HARLEY, ESQ.

LORD MAYOR OF THE

CITY OF LONDON.

My dear Sir,

A Serious Expedition in the LIVERY.



On their late Majesty's Order, the Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and the Common Council of the City of London, have been directed to send you the following Letter.

By an Alderman of LONDON.

It is the duty of the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and the Common Council of the City of London, to send you the following Letter.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON.

Printed by W. E. B. & Co. at the Old Bailey, London. Yacht in 1841.  
A. & W. B. CO. & CO. & CO.  
[Price One Shilling.]



**LETTER**

**TO THE**

**Right Hon. THOMAS HARLEY, Esq;**

**MY LORD!**

**P**ERMIT me, at once, to congratulate your Lordship and the public: your Lordship, on being re-elected one of the Representatives of the City of London in the ensuing Parliament; the public, on having, by that means, secured so *uncorrupt* a senator, and

A 2

fo

so ~~able~~ a legislator. And I the rather, my Lord, felicitate you on the present occasion, as it is very well known, that, for some time before the election came on, you had very little chance of obtaining that honour, which you have now happily acquired. That this was really the case, appears beyond the possibility of a doubt, from the steps which you took previous to the election. Letters were written by yourself, by your relations, and by all your numerous creatures and dependants, to the Liverymen of London, beseeching them for G—d's sake, for your Lordship's sake, for the sake of your family, for the honour of the City; in a word, conjuring them by every motive, which fear and apprehension could suggest to your own mind, or which you imagined could excite pity and compassion in the minds of others, to re-elect you

one

one of the four City-members. Nay, letters were written to almost every housekeeper in London and Westminster, intreating them to use their interest with their friends among the Livery, to support you on the day of election.

Not thinking yourself secure even with these resources, you had recourse, it is said, to the good offices of the M——y, who sent their instructions to Mr. ———, one of the clerks of the Board of Ordinance, in the Tower, desiring him to solicit, or rather to command (for the M—— always command) the Liverymen of London to re-elect their four former members. And yet, my Lord, with all these mighty preparations, you had well nigh missed of your aim. For, by what fatality it happened I know not; but so it was, that, on the day of election, you could scarce  
pro-



procure a majority of hands in your favour. Sir Robert Ladbroke, indeed, Mr. Beckford, and Mr. Wilkes, had evidently a majority of hands: but it was a doubt with many, whether your Lordship or Mr. Patterfon had the greater show of hands; or rather, indeed, it was no doubt: the general opinion was, that Mr. Patterfon had the greater. And yet some how, either by the favour of the ——— or by some other means, your Lordship was justled into the number of those who were returned as Members of Parliament.

This, my Lord, was a very great favour, from whomever you received it, as it saved you the expence of the poll, which you know is considerable. It is true, that when once the poll began, your Lordship soon got the start of most of the other candidates, and by hard pushing, you kept the ground  
you

you had gained, and at last was declared to be duly elected. But was the election, my Lord, perfectly free? Can any election be said to be so, where access is denied to the friends of any of the candidates? And yet, my Lord, was not this the case on the last day of the poll, when, by your Lordship's orders, the gates of the hall were shut, on the frivolous pretext of keeping out the mob, but, in reality, to exclude the friends of the other candidates? Besides, my Lord, can any election be said to be free, where the M——y openly interpose in the contest? But have not the M——y interposed in the late election, in the most open and barefaced manner? May not Mr. —— letter to the Liverymen of London, be fairly considered as an express injunction from the M——y, directing them what members they should choose?

I am

I am not, for my own part, sufficiently acquainted with the law of parliament, to say, whether such an interposition be a sufficient ground for voiding the election; though I believe the parliament frequently has, especially when the Ministry had not a majority on their side, voided many elections for a less irregularity. But this I will say, that Mr. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ has been guilty of a most flagrant violation of the laws of his country; a violation, which exposes him, if the law takes its course, to the forfeiture of his office, or, at least, to the penalty of a severe fine. I imagine, however, that if he were to be tried by your Lordship, he would escape more easily than the rioters, who lately broke the lamps at the Mansion-house. Mr. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, it is true, has violated the most sacred laws of his country; laws essential to the welfare, and even to the very essence of  
of



of a free state (for there is an express law, prohibiting persons possessed of certain offices under the Government, from being elected members of parliament, or interfering in the election of members). The rioters have only committed a slight trespass: but Mr. ——— has done you a favour; the rioters have done you an injury: the former has contributed to secure your election; the latter have expressed their contempt of your person, and their indignation at your conduct: and, therefore, I suppose, that, in passing sentence upon them, you would have some regard to the motive of their actions: nay, perhaps you might adopt for once the jesuitical maxim, *that the end sanctifies the means*; and in that case Mr. ———'s crime would be converted into a meritorious deed, and the slight offence of

of the rioters aggravated into a most atrocious crime.

Waving, however, the freedom of the election, which it is neither my business, nor my intention to contest; I have a few questions to put to your Lordship, to which I should be glad to hear satisfactory answers. And first, my Lord, I must take the liberty of asking you, what could be your reason for departing from the practice invariably observed at all former elections of members of parliament for the City of London, viz. that of the four candidates, returned by the common hall, joining their names in an address to the Livery. Mr. Wilkes, it is certain, had as great a majority of hands as any of the candidates; nay indeed, he had the greatest majority of any one of them. Your Lordship, it is well known, had the least majority; and, as I said above, it is even a question,

tion, whether you had a majority at all. It might, therefore have been expected, that a man in this predicament would have behaved with some modesty.

And yet, my Lord, if fame says true, and fame, though sometimes a liar, often says true, this strange and unexpected innovation was owing to your Lordship. Sir Robert Ladbroke, it is said, and Mr. Beckford proposed, that the four candidates returned by the common-hall, should, as usual, join their names in an address to the Livery. This proposal was rejected by your Lordship, with a petulance and peevishness ill suiting your character. What, my Lord, could be your motive for such conduct? Was it pride that prompted you? You are, it is true, a Lord's son, and a Lord's brother; nay, indeed, you are a Lord in your own proper person: but then



you should consider, that you are but a temporary Lord; and that, in six months hence, you will be plain Thomas Harley, Esq; merchant in London.

Besides, Lord's son, and Lord's brother as you are, and temporary Lord in your own proper person, it would have reflected no disgrace upon you, or upon any Lord, temporary or perpetual, in the kingdom, to have had his name joined in an address with Mr. Wilkes. I should rather think, that, in the present case, it would have been, if not an honour, at least an advantage. A little of Mr. Wilkes's mercury mixed with the City lead, might have freed the metropolis from the opprobrium, under which it has long laboured, of being the seat of dulness. But, perhaps, you was afraid, that the wicked wag would have made you the object of his wit, and the butt of his satire; and as you was

was probably conscious of having something ridiculous about you, you did not think it prudent to have, for an associate, a man, who was so perfect an adept in the management of these weapons. So far, my Lord, I own you acted wisely; for, not to pay Mr. Wilkes a compliment, which he does not deserve, I believe he is very little capable of withstanding temptations of this nature. Had he ever spared you, it would not have been out of respect to your noble birth; it would have been out of compassion to your weak understanding.

But, I think I can find out a better reason than pride, and that is interest. I say interest, my Lord: your Lordship is a citizen and a merchant; and as such must know, that interest is a much more general and more powerful motive of action than pride. But how could interest operate upon your Lordship?

ship? Why thus: your brother has a place at court, being one of the Lords of the Bedchamber; and you yourself have a lucrative contract with the Government: and you probably was afraid, lest, by seeming to favour Mr. Wilkes, or even by seeming not to oppose him, you should at once deprive your brother of his place, and yourself of your contract. In this again, I own, you acted very wisely; but did you act freely? Did you act with that spirit of independance, which becomes a Representative of the City of London? On the contrary, could the meanest member for the meanest borough in Cornwall have acted more servilely?

But perhaps you have another reason: you burned, when Sheriff, number 45 of the North Briton, and you might think it beneath you to join your name in an address with a man, whose



whose writings you had committed to the flames. I will allow you, my Lord, to assume these airs, when your Lordship is capable of composing such a paper.

Aye! but you'll say, not only were Mr. Wilkes's writings committed to the flames: his person was also committed to the Tower. It was, my Lord, and perhaps lodged in the same room where once was lodged the person of your great granduncle. But Mr. Wilkes continued in the Tower but a few days: your great granduncle continued there almost two years. And as the time of their imprisonment was very different, so also was the cause of their commitment. Your great granduncle was committed for his *treasonable* attempts to defeat the protestant succession, and bring in a popish pretender: Mr. Wilkes was committed—I do not know for what—but most certainly not for treading in the foot-

footsteps of your great granduncle. On the contrary, his zealous attachment to the august family now upon the throne, and his rooted aversion to the slavish and enslaving family, which formerly possessed it, and was justly deprived of it, have always been universally known and acknowledged. And indeed it is not unlikely, that the too open profession of these principles may have drawn upon him the resentment of your Lordship; especially if your Lordship inherits the principles of your family, which, in truth, is not improbable; for bad principles, we know, like some kinds of diseases, often run in the blood.

But if this, my Lord, was your motive, you will, I dare say, keep it a secret; and perhaps will alledge, as a more plausible reason, that you did not choose to join your name in an address with a man of so vicious a life, and so

profligate a character. Aye! my Lord, was that really your reason? was you afraid, lest your own *pure, spotless, snow-white* character should have been contaminated by the mere circumstance of having your name joined in an address with Mr. Wilkes? why truly, my Lord, if that was the case, you must be extremely delicate indeed. But what, my Lord, have you to object to Mr. Wilkes's private character? Dare you say, that he is not a man of honour, of honesty, and integrity? I would not advise you to say so, lest the law should oblige you to unsay it.

But, perhaps, you will tell me, Mr. Wilkes is a man of pleasure. I admit it my Lord; Mr. Wilkes is, or rather has been, a man of pleasure; and what then? Are there no men of pleasure in the city, and still more at court? Banish all men of pleasure from London and Westminster, and I'm afraid you'll make a  
 C terrible



terrible gap indeed. Besides, my Lord, Mr. Wilkes will naturally be cured of this foible, as he advances in years; and, to speak truth, I believe he is in a great measure, if not entirely, cured of it already. Let me likewise observe, that man of pleasure as he may have been, he never did, so far as I ever heard, invade, either by force or by fraud, the honour of any maid or matron: so that even his pleasures have been regulated by the strictest maxims of honour.

In plain English, Mr. Wilkes's great fault is, not that he is a man of pleasure, but that he is not a man of prudence, or rather of cunning; and never endeavoured to conceal his foibles. Many, my Lord, of you wise citizens, often appear better than you are: Mr. Wilkes, I'm afraid, has sometimes appeared worse. Had he been endued with a little of that gravity, which is so common among the Citizens  
of

of London, and of which, it must be owned, they have enough, and to spare, he might now have passed for as *pious*, as *sober*, and as *continent* a man, as any that lives between Temple-Bar and Aldgate. But, fool that he was, he could never bring himself to put on the *mask of hypocrisy*; which, like the *virtue of charity*, covers a *multitude of sins*. Conscious of being possessed of real virtues and abilities, he has ever been little anxious to acquire fictitious ones; and satisfied with the substance, he has never minded the shadow. He could never persuade himself to assume that formal, solemn, demure air, which he well knew to be often a cover for vice, and almost always a cover for stupidity.

What's the bent brow, or neck in thought reclin'd?  
 The *body's wisdom*, to conceal the *mind*.  
 I see the *fool*, when I behold the *screen*:  
 For 'tis the wise man's interest to be seen.  
 And be this truth eternal ne'er forgot,  
*Solemnity's a cover for a sot.*

YOUNG.

Thus

Thus, my Lord, have I endeavoured to expose the futility of all the excuses I ever heard made, for your refusing to join your name in the same address with Mr. Wilkes. But, whatever was your motive for this strange conduct, I will take the freedom of whispering a secret in your Lordship's ear, and it is this; that the name of John Wilkes, Esq; will be remembered and respected by the friends of liberty, when that of Thomas Harley, Esq; is buried in oblivion.

*A serious*

Thus



*A serious expostulation with the Livermen of London, on their late conduct during the Election of the four City-Members for the ensuing Parliament.*

*Gentlemen and fellow-Citizens!*

**F**OR I shall still distinguish you by those names; though I must frankly confess, I begin to entertain some doubt whether you have any just pretensions to the former; and for my own part, if your conduct on all future occasions be of a piece with that which you observed in the late memorable contest, I shall be ashamed to address you by the latter.

For what, let me ask you, can be more inconsistent with the character of a gentleman, than to falsify one's word, to break one's promise, to say one thing and do another, to inspire a man with the most sanguine hopes of success at the very moment you intend to disappoint him? If this be

D acting

acting the part of a gentleman, then I have formed a very improper notion of that character. But is not this the very part you have acted towards one of your late candidates? Had not Mr. Wilkes, on the day of election, by far the greatest show of hands, of any of those who were put in nomination? But what sincerity there was in these expressions of your zeal, the poll, which is now finished, sufficiently demonstrates.

The truth is, gentlemen, you will hold up your hands for your liberties; you will huzza for your liberties; you will rail, you will bawl, you will clamour for your liberties; but I am fully convinced in my own mind, that not one in six of you would part with a single customer for your liberties. Aye, gentlemen, here is the rub: you will do every thing for your liberties that does not interfere with your interest; but where that is concerned, you beg to be excused; your little, partial, selfish interests must first be consulted, and then you will afterwards, if you conveniently can, take care of your liberties.

Your

Your votes are given, not from any real regard to the merit of the different candidates, but merely in consequence of your connections in trade. For had you been actuated by the former of these motives, you could not have failed of giving your votes to a man, who, notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary by some court-sycophants, has, I will venture to say, done and suffered more for the cause of liberty, than any other man since the days of the immortal Hampden. And is this the way to encourage others to stand up in defence of your liberties, to neglect the man who has stood up in their defence with such undaunted resolution?

The real patriot, it is true, feels an inexpressible pleasure in performing acts beneficial to his country, independant of all consideration in what manner they may be received by his fellow-citizens; and in this sense surely, if in any, virtue is its own reward. But the secret pleasure attending the performance of patriotic actions, is not a sufficient incitement to the generality of mankind: they want something more;



they want the applause of their fellow-citizens; not, I mean, that empty applause, which consists merely in noisy acclamation; for that, it must be owned, you have bestowed upon Mr. Wilkes in as liberal and generous a manner as ever you bestowed upon any person whatever: but I mean that sincere applause, which proceeds from the heart, which is productive of real and visible effects, and is followed by solid and substantial favours.

And here, gentlemen, I'm afraid, you will find it extremely difficult to justify your conduct. Upon the day of election, you held up your hands in favour of Mr. Wilkes; that is, you *virtually* promised him your votes, and *actually* chose him one of your representatives in parliament. And yet, when the necessity of a poll appeared, and you came, in good earnest, to give your votes, you shamefully turned tail, and left him in the lurch. Upon what principles of justice, of equity, of honour, or of common honesty, you can defend such proceedings, I am really at a loss to determine.

And

And yet, gentlemen, I should be extremely glad to see some feasible apology made in your behalf. For I am equally ashamed and vexed to hear the greatest part of the Liverymen of London stigmatized (as I daily hear them stigmatized) as a parcel of *low, venal, and mercenary wretches*; or what is yet worse, of *false and deceitful hypocrites*. I know it has been said in your defence, that the common-hall, on the day of election, was filled with the mob, and not with Liverymen. But this I can affirm, upon the best authority, to be an absolute falshood; nine tenths, at least, of the assembly were Liverymen; and they all of them, almost to a man, held up their hands in Favour of Mr. Wilkes.

The truth is, gentlemen, I believe most of you have a real regard for Mr. Wilkes, but you were afraid to express it, lest you should offend your customers; and as you thought you would not be distinguished in the croud, you there gave full scope to the natural sentiments of your hearts, and huzzaed and held up your hands for your favourite

yourite candidate. But the moment you came forward to poll, the piercing eye and inquisitive look of alderman such-a-one, 'squire such-a-one, and Mr. such-a-one, who bought their bread from one of you, their meat from another, their candles from a third, and their soap from a fourth ; I say, gentlemen, the piercing eye and inquisitive look of these worthy customers, struck a damp upon your mind, made you give the lie to your heart, and induced you, I had almost said compelled you, to withhold your votes from the man, whom, in your conscience, you preferred to all the other candidates. Such is the *independence, the boasted independence*, of the worthy Liverymen of the City of London !

Besides, gentlemen, you very prudently, I will not say very nobly, considered, that *Verba volant, sed litera scripta manet*. I beg pardon, gentlemen, for quoting this scrap of Latin : your *little Billies and Dickies*, if they have got into their *accidence*, will explain it to you. You wisely reflected, that as in polling you must set down your names in a book, which was open to



the inspection of all the candidates, that book (like the book of doomsday) would rise up in judgment against you : that the several candidates would there have an opportunity of distinguishing their friends from their foes, and would certainly withdraw their custom and favours from those who had not voted for them. And as to the promise, I mean the *virtual* promise, you had given to Mr. Wilkes (for such I must consider your holding up your hands in his favour) I say, gentlemen, as to that promise, you probably thought there could be no great harm in breaking it, agreeable to the maxim of the celebrated Thrasher and Poet, Stephen Duck, who says,

If words are wind, as some allow,

No promises can bind ;

Since *breaking* of the strictest vow,

Is only *breaking* wind.

But, gentlemen, not only have you given your votes without any real regard to the merit of the different candidates, and merely  
in

consequence of your connections in trade; that is, from the lowest and most mercenary motives: what is worse, if I am rightly informed, some of you have even sold your votes, and many of you kept back your votes to the very last, in expectation that their price would still rise; nay, it is confidently reported, that votes were bought and sold as currently, tho' not as openly, as India-bonds or Bank-bills in Change-alley. If this be true, gentlemen, what is become of your wonted *probity* and *patriotism*? How can you be said to be superior to all *venality* and *corruption*? and in what respects is the City of London preferable to the meanest and most despicable Borough in the kingdom?

We have long heard of the *rotten parts* of the constitution, and the necessity of cutting off those corrupted members, in order to prevent the infection from spreading: but if the accusation brought against you by your enemies be well founded, the metropolis itself is the most *rotten part* of the constitution, and the state, of consequence, is irretriev-

irretrievably ruined. For though a man may live with the loss of a hand, an arm, or a leg, I never yet heard of any one that lived after having lost his head or his heart.

It was, therefore, very well observed by one of your brother liverymen, in an address he made to the public, " That if the  
 " venality and corruption, which have been  
 " long openly preying upon the limbs of  
 " our country, have at last secretly seized on  
 " her heart and vitals in the city of London, mortifying is our condition! Let  
 " shame (says he) for ever seal up our lips,  
 " and the name of LIBERTY be heard in  
 " our streets no more." Aye, gentlemen! but you may tell him, that if we do not hear of LIBERTY we shall hear of MONEY, and that is as good or better :

————— *quærenda pecunia primum;*  
*Virtus post nummos* —————

That is, gentlemen (lest your *little Billies and Dickies* should not be able to explain it) give me a *plum*, and a fig for *liberty*.



The truth is, gentlemen, your *money* is your idol, your god: to that you will sacrifice your liberty, your religion, your honour, your conscience: in a word, every thing but ——— your *money*. And yet, gentlemen, let me tell you, that the inordinate love of money may defeat its own end; and that, from too eager a desire of acquiring, you may, at last, lose the means of preserving: for if once your liberty is sacrificed to your love of money, it will then be in the power of an arbitrary court to impose upon you whatever taxes, and levy upon you whatever contributions it pleases; and then you will find your money, your *dear*, your *beloved*, your *adored money*, slipping through your fingers you know not how, or perhaps ravished from you, whether you will or not. Think of this, gentlemen! and be content with possessing a little less money, in order to have the means of securing what you have got.

I come now to consider the objections, which you have to Mr. Wilkes, and which  
you

you alledged in excuse for not chusing him one of your representatives in parliament. And first, some of you had the weakness to say, that you looked upon his offering himself a candidate for London, as an insult offered to the city.]

But how, in G—d's name, will you prove it an insult? Mr. Wilkes is a gentleman by birth and education. He has already distinguished himself in the British senate, more, most certainly, than any of your present members; more, perhaps, than any member you ever had, Sir John Barnard excepted. He has shewn himself, beyond any of his compatriots, to be a steady friend to the rights and privileges of his fellow-subjects. He has not only been a hero; he has almost been a martyr in the glorious cause of liberty. He has given repeated and incontestible proofs of his being a man of ability, integrity, fortitude, and of every other quality, that can fit him for the discharge of the important trust which he wished you to repose in him.

How then can you call it an insult? what more would you have? — O ho! gentlemen, I understand you: you would have a man of fortune; a man possessed of one *plum*, or perhaps of two *plums*. Aye, aye, gentlemen, nothing, I find, but money will do in the city: money is the only passport to all your favours. You have weighed Mr. Wilkes in the balance, and have found him wanting — in this most essential of all qualifications. The city would be debased in being represented by a man of small fortune. And yet, gentlemen, it is the general opinion, that some of your present members are not men of very large fortunes.

Besides, permit me to observe, that Mr. Wilkes was born to, and was once actually possessed of, as good a fortune — I will not say as some of your *city dons*; for he was never, I believe, master of a whole *plum*, perhaps not even of half a *plum* — but of as good a fortune, as one half the members of the house of commons. And tho', partly by a concurrence of untoward circumstances, partly by his own indiscretion  
and



and want of oeconomy — for I will not defend him in points, where, I am persuaded, he would not defend himself. — I say, though partly by a concurrence of untoward circumstances, partly by his own indiscretion and want of oeconomy, that fortune be considerably impaired, and almost ruined; yet is he in a fair way of having it re-established upon such a footing, as will enable him to act with as much freedom and independance as any member of the British legislature.

Let me likewise ask you on this head, gentlemen, how you can have the presumption to say, that a man who has been chosen by such a great majority of the independant Freeholders of the county of Middlesex, has offered you an insult in declaring himself a candidate for the city of London? Are those *low, venal, and mercenary wretches, the Liverymen of London* — for such, it is affirmed, you have plainly proved yourselves, by your late base conduct. — Are these wretches a more respectable body than the Freeholders of Mid-

Middlesex? You cannot, you dare not say it: if you should, you will only add to our pity for your ignorance, the contempt that is due to such intolerable vanity.

Another objection, which, as it is currently reported, you have to Mr. Wilkes, is, that he wrote a smutty and obscene book, intitled an — — —, and attacked the king's speech with an indecent freedom. But here, Gentlemen, I apprehend you are under a considerable mistake. Mr. Wilkes did not write this book: it was written by the son of a worthy Archbishop of Canterbury, himself a distinguished member of the house of commons. Mr. Wilkes is, indeed, said to have printed this book: and what then? would you anathematize him merely on that account? I am afraid, Gentlemen, that, by this method of proceeding, you would anathematize one half of the writers and printers that ever existed in England. I will not, however, undertake to vindicate Mr. Wilkes in this particular. I think it would have been much better, had he printed no such book, or given the world occasion to suspect that he had printed  
such

such a book. Nay, I think it would have been much better, had no such book been written or printed at all; for I must freely give my verdict against all kind of books, that have the least tendency to debauch the minds or corrupt the morals of the people.

Here, however, I cannot help remarking, that many of your grave, formal gentlemen, who exclaim publicly against all books of obscenity, are yet the first to purchase and read them privately; and I make no doubt but if all the libraries in town were examined, more books of that kind would be found in the libraries of your sober, sedate gentlemen, than in those of the greatest rakes and libertines. Far be it from me, gentlemen, to justify the conduct either of the one or of the other; but I own I cannot suppress my indignation, when I hear an old hypocritical Lecher, who, under the mask of virtue and religion, indulges himself in the most criminal pleasures, damning to perpetual infamy in this world, and perhaps to eternal punishments in the next,

the



the man who ventures to write or print a little obscenity.

As to the other part of the accusation, viz. that Mr. Wilkes attacked the king's speech with an indecent freedom, it cannot be denied, that Mr. Wilkes did attack the king's speech; but he attacked it as the minister's, not as the king's; and as such it ever has been, and ever ought to be considered, at least in parliament. It has, I think, been always held as a maxim in the law, that the king can do no wrong; that is, in his public capacity, he can do nothing: in other words, he can do nothing without the advice of his servants, who must be responsible for his conduct. The first prince that ever attempted to overturn this salutary maxim, was that unhappy and infatuated sovereign, King Charles the First, who, when any thing was done wrong, pretended that it was done by himself, not by his servants, and therefore could not be questioned. The consequence of which doctrine was, that no minister could be called to account for any treachery he had  
been

been guilty of towards his country. The consequence of which doctrine, were it once generally received, would (I will venture to say) be the total subversion of our free government, and the establishment of an absolute and despotic monarchy. For the proposition, when drawn out in its proper form, will stand thus: *The king can do no wrong; that is, nothing which the king does must be supposed to be wrong; or ought to be questioned. But the king may do any thing, or every thing: therefore any kind, or every kind of wrong may be done, and yet cannot be questioned.* Let those who are better skilled than I am in the quirks of the law, or the subtilties of logic, disprove this conclusion, if they can. For my own part, it appears to me to be as plain as any demonstration in Euclid.

I therefore repeat it; as the king can do no wrong, he can, in his public capacity, do nothing. He cannot even be supposed, at least in either house, to compose his speech to the parliament: that is, and ever has been, considered as the speech of the minister, and ought to be treated accordingly. I own, indeed,

that as it is delivered by the king, it ought, on that account, to be treated with great decency and respect; as every thing most certainly ought that is communicated by the sovereign. I likewise acknowledge, that no man is at liberty to say, in writing or in conversation, the same things of the king's speech as he may say in parliament. And here, if I mistake not, lay Mr. Wilkes's error. In the heat of altercation and the hurry of composition, he forgot this necessary distinction. He forgot, or at least he acted as if he had forgot, that he could not decently, and perhaps not even safely, use the same freedom with the king's speech without as within the walls of St. Stephen's chapel. But surely for this oversight he has already suffered more than any other man ever suffered for such an oversight. It ought also to be considered, that as Mr. Wilkes attacked the king's speech, not as the king's but as the minister's, the reflections he made upon it, must be supposed to be levelled, not at the king, but at the minister.

And



And in truth, if all those, who have said, that kings' speeches often contain many groundless assertions, were to be treated as libellers; I'm afraid that, instead of one, ten thousand libellers might be found in the kingdom; as I believe there have been very few speeches delivered from the throne for this century past and upwards, that have not been accused of containing the grossest impositions. They were not, therefore, the king's friends, they were his enemies, who advised him to consider the reflections made upon his speech as a personal insult offered to his majesty. The insult, if there was any, was offered to the minister, not to the king. But it has always been the custom of weak and worthless ministers to justify their measures by the sanction of the royal name, and to endeavour to screen themselves from popular resentment, by taking shelter behind the throne.

The throne, however, never was, and, I hope, never will be able to protect any wicked minister from the just indignation of the people. If it should, then farewell to

our liberties. All respect, I own, is due to the royal authority, while it is employed to proper purposes; but if ever it should be employed to purposes, with which it can, *legally* and *constitutionally*, have no concern, it ought to be entirely disregarded.

Such, we find, were the sentiments of that patriotic, and yet loyal nobleman, the Earl of Ossory, in the reign of King Charles the Second, who, when an attempt was made upon his father's life by some assassins, supposed to be suborned by the Duke of Buckingham, addressed that nobleman, even in the king's presence, to the following effect: "My lord, I know well, that you are at the bottom of this late attempt upon my father: but I give you warning, if by any means he comes to a violent end, I shall not be at a loss to know the author: I shall consider you as the assassin: I shall treat you as such; and wherever I meet you I shall *pistol* you, though you stood behind the *king's* *chair*; and I tell it you in his *majesty's* *presence*, that you may be sure I shall not fail of performance\*."

\* Carte's Ormond, vol. 2, p. 225.

A third objection which you have to Mr. Wilkes (for I have likewise heard some of you make such an objection to him) is, that he endeavoured to inflame the inhabitants of one part of the kingdom against those of the other, and to involve his country in all the horrors and calamities of a civil war. But this objection, after all the specious things that have been said in support of it, is as ill founded as either of the preceding.

Mr. Wilkes, it is true, did attack the Scottish favourite with all that force of argument, all that flow of eloquence, all that keenness of wit, and all that poignancy of satire, of which he is such a consummate master; but he attacked him as a favourite, not as a Scotchman; and if he endeavoured to render him more odious on account of his being a Scotchman, it was chiefly owing to the Scots themselves; not indeed of the Scots in general, but of such of them as were the immediate creatures and dependants of the favourite; who, conscious of the weakness of their patron's cause, artfully attempted to confound it with  
the



the cause of his country: so that every Scotchman (and, to their honour be it spoken, many such there were) who would not defend, at all hazards, the conduct of the favourite, was branded, by the favourite's creatures, as an enemy to his country.

Such, I say, was the origin of confounding the cause of the favourite with that of his country. The opinion was first broached by knaves, and afterwards adopted by fools; and I will take upon me to affirm, that it was never adopted by any other. The sensible part of the Scottish nation were too wise ever to give into such a ridiculous notion. They nobly and gallantly said, that if Lord B—— was guilty, he ought not to be protected, because he was a Scotchman; nor if innocent, ought he to be condemned, because he was a native of that country. But had Mr. Wilkes attacked the whole Scottish nation, without pointing his satire against any particular person, he might easily have produced precedents for such a conduct. Dean Swift acted this very part in the reign of Queen Anne. He wrote a libel against the whole Scottish

tilth nation, fraught with such malice and virulence, as inflamed to the highest degree the inhabitants of that part of the island, and induced the government to offer a reward for discovering the author. Yet Dean Swift then was, and still is considered as a very worthy man; and why Mr. Wilkes should for the same conduct (though of the same conduct he has not been guilty) be branded as an incendiary, I cannot well discern.

Far be it from me, however, to approve of such illiberal proceedings. I am, for my own part, a citizen of the world; and I entertain a most supreme contempt for every one that is not. I esteem a man of sense, I love a man of virtue, wherever I find him, and wherever born or bred, were it even in the highlands of Scotland, or in the wilds of Westphalia; and I despise a fool, and hate a knave, though born in the city of London, nay in St. James's palace. I must therefore disapprove of all national reflections. They are always odious, because they are unjust. Men of parts and probity are to be found in all countries, and per-

perhaps too, in a pretty equal degree in all countries.

I own, indeed, that different nations are distinguished by different peculiarities of humour and temper. The English, for instance, are steady and resolute; the Scots, fiery and impetuous; the Irish, rash and headstrong; the French, airy and volatile; the Spaniards, grave and solemn; and the Germans, heavy and phlegmatic. But still I insist, that in point of moral and intellectual qualities (by which last I mean not actual knowledge, but the capacity of attaining knowledge) all nations are nearly upon a level; and that no one nation has a better right than another to throw reflections upon the rest. I therefore repeat it, all national reflections are unjust. But if Mr. Wilkes did endeavour to render Lord B—— more odious on account of his being a Scotchman, he very probably thought he might justify his conduct by the example of all political writers, who seem, time out of mind, to have adopted it as a maxim, that every advantage



advantage may be fairly taken against an enemy: *Dolus an virtus, quis in hoste requirit.*

But Mr. Wilkes attacked Lord B—— principally, not as a Scotchman, but as a favourite; and in this he acted both a generous and a patriotic part. Favourites ever have been, and ever will be odious, especially if they intrude themselves into the management of public affairs. I would not, indeed, deprive a king of the privilege, which every common man enjoys, of having a friend, or, if you will, a favourite: but if he has, let him confine him to a private station, and not exalt him into a public one: let him, if he pleases, make him his groom of the stole, or chamberlain, or steward of his household; but let him not appoint him secretary of state, or first lord of the treasury. In other words, let him make him one of his menial servants, but not one of the servants of the public. Within the former sphere, a favourite may be safe, perhaps he may even be popular; in the latter sphere he can never be popular, perhaps he cannot even be safe. And indeed I think it is not im-

G

probable,

probable, that had Lord B—— continued to this day groom of the stole, as he was at the time of his majesty's accession, he might now have been one of the most popular noblemen in England. Every act of generosity, which the king performed, would have been ascribed to his counsel and suggestion. Whereas by forcing himself into a public station, he has borne the blame (whether justly or unjustly I pretend not to say) of most of the blunders which, for these seven years past, the ministry have committed.

This distinction between the menial servants of the king, and the servants of the public, ought ever to be carefully observed. A king may, of his own mere motion, and according to his good liking, appoint the former; but he never can, at least, if he act like a wise king, he never ought, to appoint the latter, but in compliance with the voice of the public. A knowledge of the ceremonies and punctilios of a court, and of the common œconomy of a household, may qualify a man for the first; but nothing but the most eminent parliamentary abilities can fit him for the

the last. Former parliaments have been so sensible of the necessity of this distinction, that they have frequently attempted to resume into their own hands the appointment of the servants of the public. And, indeed, perhaps, it would be well for the nation, were such an improvement made in the Government. We should not then hear of the public treasure being committed to the care of a thoughtless hair-brained youth, who, but a few years ago, gamed away his own private fortune; and all too for no other reason, than because he has the address to please the favourite, or because during his childhood he happened to be the K——'s play-fellow.

I said, that favourites were ever odious; and for the truth of this assertion, the whole English history will be my voucher. Gaveston and the Spencers, in the reign of King Edward II. The Earls of Oxford and Suffolk, in the reign of King Richard II. Carr, Earl of Somerset, in the reign of King James I. and Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, in that of King Charles I. are striking instances to this purpose. And



what is remarkable, most of these favourites came to an untimely end, as did also most of the unhappy princes who had distinguished them by their favour. Nor, indeed, in this is there any thing surprising: for as all these were weak princes (the truth is, none but weak princes ever have favourites) and as every man in an exalted station is exposed to the greater danger, the less he is qualified for the duties of his office, we have no reason to wonder, that these princes and their favourites met with the fate which finally befel them.

Another argument, which I have to urge in Mr. Wilkes's behalf, on this head, is, that if he attacked the Scottish favourite, he only treated him as he would have treated an English one: he would have attacked an English favourite with the same spirit and vehemence. The English have always pulled down their own favourites; and shall not they be allowed to pull down a Scottish favourite? Shall a man, because born on the North side of the Tweed, be secured from the effects of that popular odium, which has been the unavoidable fate of all favourites

favourites without exception? Forbid it, justice! forbid it, common sense! If any of the Scots should be so very foolish as to maintain such an absurdity, pull down them and the favourite along with them. But I will answer for the generality of the Scottish nation, that they have too much sense to maintain such an absurdity; and I can further say, from my own knowledge, that Mr. Wilkes has some as steady friends, and Lord B—— some as determined enemies, among the Scots, as among the English: friends and enemies, not from prejudice, but from principle; not on account of the trifling consideration of the place of a man's birth, or the nature of his private conduct, but from a firm persuasion, that the one is a friend, the other an enemy to the liberties of his country.

A fourth objection, which you have to Mr. Wilkes, is, that he is an outlaw, and, of consequence, not capable of being chosen a member of parliament; but of this objection the whole English history is one continued refutation. Outlaws have frequently been chosen members of parliament, and  
declared

declared too to be legally chosen by the parliament itself, the sole judge of the qualifications of its own members. But, perhaps, you gentlemen of the Livery of London, may think yourselves wiser than the great council of the nation; though I question much if the latter will be very willing, at least in this respect, to subscribe to your decision. In the 22d year of Q. Elizabeth, that is, in the year 1580, one Vaughan was chosen a member of parliament; and tho' an outlaw, he was allowed to take his seat in the house. In the 35th year of the same reign, the Commons expressly voted, and established it as a general rule, that a person outlawed might be elected a member of parliament. Some opposition, it is true, was made to this practice by the succeeding monarch. In the 2d year of K. James I. Sir Francis Goodwin was chosen member for the county of Bucks; and his return, as usual, was made into chancery. The chancellor, pronouncing him an outlaw, vacated his seat, and issued writs for a new election. Sir John Fortescue was chosen in his place by the county; but the first act

of



of the house was to reverse the chancellor's sentence, and restore Sir Francis to his seat.

This affair gave occasion to a violent dispute between the king and the commons; and many vehement speeches were made upon it in the house. "By this course," said a member, "the free elections of the counties is taken away; and none shall be chosen but such as shall please the king and council. Let us, therefore, with fortitude, understanding, and sincerity, seek to maintain our privilege. This cannot be construed any contempt in us, but merely a maintenance of our common rights, which our ancestors have left us, and which it is just and fit for us to transmit to our posterity." Another said; "This may be called a *quo warranta* to seize all our liberties." "A chancellor," added a third, "by this course may call a parliament, consisting of what persons he pleases. Any suggestion, by any person, may be the cause of sending a new writ. It is come to this plain question, whether the Chancery

"or Parliament ought to have authority?" \*

This matter, however, is now settled beyond the possibility of a doubt. The authority of the house in determining the legality of elections is absolute, supreme, and uncontrollable by any other power; and as the house has repeatedly declared, that outlaws may be chosen members of parliament, it argues either the grossest ignorance, or the most barefaced impudence, to assert the contrary.

A fifth objection which I have heard some of you make against choosing Mr. Wilkes one of your Representatives in parliament, is, that you were afraid, lest, by so doing, you should offend the king. I am really glad, gentlemen, to see such a spirit of loyalty prevail in the City. 'Tis a noble plant; cherish it by all means. But remember, that loyalty is an attachment to the laws, not to the king; and as far as I understand the laws, they expressly

30 Journals, 30 March, 1664.

forbid

forbid either the king, or any of his ministers, to interfere, in the least, in the election of members of parliament. Should you once come to be influenced in this matter by their advice, or a regard to their humour, we may expect, in time, to see the four City-members nominated by the ——— like the barons of the Cinque-ports, or the sixteen peers for Scotland.

Besides, gentlemen, it is paying the king no compliment, to represent him as entertaining a personal antipathy to Mr. Wilkes. The king should know no antipathy, but what the law inspires. If Mr. Wilkes has offended the law, let him suffer the punishment, which the law directs; but let not the king, who is the chief executor of the law, add to the punishment from any private pique or animosity. I'm afraid, therefore, gentlemen, that, in this instance, instead of paying the king a compliment, you have offered him an insult. You have degraded him from the rank of a supreme magistrate, superior to all little, low partialities, into that of a private man, full of spleen, passion, and prejudice.

Thus, gentlemen, have I impartially considered, and, I hope, effectually overturned all the objections, which I ever heard you bring

H

against



against choosing Mr. Wilkes one of your Representatives in Parliament. And now let me ask you, how you can answer it, I do not say to your own conscience (for that, I know, has no other standard of right and wrong, than your own little, narrow, selfish interests) but to the world around you, that you refused choosing, as one of your Representatives, a man, who had distinguished himself so nobly in the cause of liberty. How do you think it will sound in the annals of Great Britain, that, in the year 1768, the Liverymen of London refused choosing this man, who, but a few days after, was chosen by the independent Freeholders of the County of Middlesex? That the former were actuated by the base motive of venality and corruption, and the still baser motive of fear and cowardice; and that the latter acted only from a sincere regard to the real interest and welfare of their country? Let the fact, however, sound as it will, it will certainly be recorded by the faithful historian; and will transmit, with infamy, the name of the Liverymen of London to the latest posterity.

